



HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY

152nd Season

DR. EDWARD F. GILDAY, *Conductor*

Concert 979

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Collegiate Chapel, Merrimack College

North Andover, Massachusetts

Thursday, December 15, 1966 at 8:30 p.m.

SOLOISTS

MARILYN VAN STRUM, *Soprano*

JUDITH BELLE BENMOSHE, *Contralto*

RICHARD WALL, *Tenor*

GERALD LOONEY, *Bass*

The Chorus of the Handel and Haydn Society

WILLEM FRANK, *Organist*

America's Oldest Active Choral Society

Founded 1815

Incorporated 1816

MUSIC

CHORUSES

Hooray for the Lord!

In the late summer of 1741, Composer George Frederick Handel, plagued by ill health and spurned by a once-adoring public, isolated himself in his London house to work on a new oratorio. Falling into an almost trancelike state, he slaved feverishly day and night with little food or sleep. At one point a servant found him at his desk, tears streaming down his face. "I did think I did see all Heaven before me," Handel cried, "and the great God himself!" After 23 days Handel emerged with his monumental *Messiah*, the profoundly moving testament of Christian faith that has become the most revered of all sacred music traditionally performed during the Christmas season.

Nowhere is the *Messiah* tradition more cherished than in Boston, where the Handel and Haydn Society, the oldest active choral group in the U.S., has sung the oratorio every Christmas for the past 146 years. This season's uncut performance at Symphony Hall was sold out, attracting a devoted cross section of Bostonians to whom the *Messiah* is as integral a part of Christmas as the Beacon Hill bell ringers or the oyster stuffing for the turkey.

Culturally Ready. Many in the audience had not missed a performance since they were children. One white-haired lady allowed that she had been coming for more than half a century, but confessed that she couldn't "tell how good this year's performance was because my hearing-aid batteries went dead." More fortunate were the audiences who last week listened to a taped performance of the society's uncut *Messiah* over

45 educational TV stations across the country.

This season marks the 150th anniversary of the Handel and Haydn Society. It will be celebrated in March with the world premiere of *The Passion According to St. Luke* by American Composer Randall Thompson, and again in October with a week-long international choral festival to be held in Symphony Hall. Among the participants: Britain's Huddersfield Choral Society, Vienna's Singverein of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.

Though the society boasts a repertoire of some 100 choral works, many New Englanders know it simply as the "*Messiah* Society." The complete *Messiah*, in fact, was given its U.S. premiere (1818) by the society, as were many of the great choral works, including Haydn's *Creation* (1819), Handel's *Solomon* (1855) and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (1848), a coup that was achieved only after the society's president sought out Mendelssohn in London and convinced him that Boston was culturally ready for the work.

Vast Confusion. The Handel and Haydn Society was the outgrowth of a chorus assembled in 1815 for a Peace Jubilee celebrating the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, word of which took 52 days to reach Boston. The society grew rapidly, until by the late 1850s it was more than 700 voices strong. Not a historical event passed in old Boston that the society did not commemorate with a concert, featuring such speakers as Daniel Webster and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In 1872 the society helped stage one of the most grandiose performances in

musical history—an International Peace Jubilee in which a chorus of 17,000 voices assembled in the now-razed Boston Coliseum and sang to the accompaniment of a 1,500-piece orchestra and the sounding of anvils, cannons and bells. The result, observed a reviewer at the time, was "vast confusion."

Today the society numbers 150 voices from three New England states. They are nurses, lawyers, a cab driver, a mortician, music teachers, a hairdresser, a boilermaker. Most are church members, and all approach their work with a deep sense of spiritual mission. At one recent rehearsal Conductor Edward Gilday, 54, told his singers that "the *Messiah* is an ecclesiastical way of saying 'Hooray for the Lord!' Express your faith openly. Don't be afraid to bare your souls in public. This is the Lord you're talking about, not the mayor of Boston. Let your hair down, lose yourself in the anonymity of 150 voices."

Instead of Diapers. And they do. Caught up in the swelling power of the music, they sing out with the eloquence of conviction, their expressions grow radiant, they gaze heavenward, and the eyes of some of the women well with tears. "It's about the most exciting thing there is," says Bass Eldon Fay, a Boston sales manager who has been singing with the society for 23 years. "You get so much more out of it if you really believe it."

Society members are not only devout but devoted; even the busiest seldom miss a rehearsal. Explains Gilday: "For a woman whose day is changing diapers or a man who shuffles paper, singing sacred music is an exciting release. In this age when everything is being debunked, it's nice to know that for a few hours every week we can get together and come close to something spiritual—ly sublime."

JAMES F. COYNE



HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY SINGING "MESSIAH" AT BOSTON'S SYMPHONY HALL
From boilermakers and hairdressers a sense of the sublime.

TIME
THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE
January 1, 1965 Vol. 85, No. 1

It is requested that there be no applause except at intermission.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Born in Halle, February 23, 1685 Died in London, April 13, 1759

THE MESSIAH

Handel's *Messiah*, an oratorio in three parts, was written in 1741 in about three weeks (from a libretto from the Scriptures by Jennens) and was first produced by Handel in Dublin using a group of about eighty musicians about equally divided into singers and instrumentalists. As with the singers, the instrumentalists were divided into a group of soloists and an instrumental chorus. *Messiah* has been continually performed since its original production, sometimes by as many as 4000 musicians — in contrast to the long periods of oblivion which befell the St. Matthew Passion, the parallel work of Bach.

Despite this continuity of performance, the present-day listener cannot hear *Messiah* performed as it was in the middle of the eighteenth century; musical tastes change under the influence of succeeding generations of conductors and composers, and reverence for the intentions of an artist did not prevail until recent times. (Indeed, even Mozart reorchestrated *Messiah*, adding instruments as well as musical lines). The voices of singers had a less resonant quality than is customary now. The soprano and contralto solo parts were taken by castrati and countertenors. The soloists' parts were not written out in full — a skeletonized line served as a challenge to the powers of embellishment of the soloist. Similarly, the quality of the instruments has changed considerably from that of the same-named instruments of Handel's time. What must be a testimony to the greatness of *Messiah* is that the work is able to sound magnificent almost regardless of the form of presentation.

Although tonight's performance uses the organ in place of the orchestra, it will, in many ways, be typical of the modern performance: the size of the chorus, the tempi, the order of the arias and choruses, as well as the voices to which the arias are assigned, are quite common today. This should not be surprising when one considers that the modern style of performance has to a significant extent been determined by the past performances of the Handel and Haydn Society.

A one sentence suggestion to the first-time listener is that he may heighten his pleasure in the sound by looking for the always apparent parallels between the libretto and the musical line.

B. COGEN

PART ONE

THE PROPHECIES AND THE FULFILLMENT

1. Overture (Grave: Fugue)

TENOR RECITATIVE

2. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned . . .
The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

TENOR ARIA

3. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill . . . made low: . . . the crooked . . . straight, and the rough places plain:

CHORUS

4. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

BASS RECITATIVE

5. . . . thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once . . . a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, . . . the sea, and the dry land;
And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: . . .
. . . the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom we delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

BASS ARIA

6. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire . . .

CHORUS

7. . . . and he shall purify the sons of Levi, . . . that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

ALTO RECITATIVE

8. . . . Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son and shall call his name Emmanuel, "God-with-us."

ALTO ARIA AND CHORUS

9. O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get Thee up into the high mountain; O Thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up Thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

CHORUS

10. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

11. PASTORAL SYMPHONY

SOPRANO RECITATIVE

12. . . . there . . . shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

13. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

RECITATIVE

14. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

15. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

CHORUS

16. Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.

SOPRANO ARIA

17. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: He is the righteous Saviour, . . . and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: . . .

ALTO RECITATIVE

18. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf . . . unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: . . .

ALTO AND SOPRANO ARIA

19. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: and he shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and . . . gently lead those that are with young.

Come unto Him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest.

Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

CHORUS

20. . . . His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

INTERMISSION

PART TWO

THE PASSION AND THE TRIUMPH

CHORUS

21. . . . Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! . . .

ALTO ARIA

22. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . .

CHORUS

23. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . .
. . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

TENOR RECITATIVE

24. Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness: He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man; neither found He any to comfort Him.

TENOR ARIA

25. . . . Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow . . .

CHORUS

26. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

SOPRANO ARIA AND CHORUS

27. . . . How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

. . . their sound is gone out unto all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

BASS ARIA

28. Why do the nations so furiously rage together, . . . why do the people imagine a vain thing?

The kinds of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His annointed, . . .

CHORUS

29. Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

CHORUS

30. Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

. . . The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

. . . King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

PART THREE

THANKSGIVING FOR THE DEFEAT OF DEATH

SOPRANO ARIA

31. . . . I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth :

And though . . . worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

For now is Christ risen from the dead, . . . the first fruits of them that sleep.

CHORUS

32. . . . since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

CHORUS

33. . . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us to God by His blood to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

. . . Blessing, and honour, . . . glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

34. Amen.



Messiah was first produced in Dublin, April 13, 1742, with the composer conducting. The American premiere of Messiah was given by the Handel and Haydn Society in Boylston Hall, Boston, on Christmas Day, 1818. This is the 233rd performance of the work by the Society.

